

## ARTEMIS

The daughter of [Leto](#) and [Zeus](#), and the twin of [Apollo](#). Artemis is the goddess of the wilderness, the hunt and wild animals, and fertility (she became a goddess of fertility and childbirth mainly in cities). She was often depicted with the crescent of the moon above her forehead and was sometimes identified with [Selene](#) (goddess of the moon). Artemis was one of the Olympians and a virgin goddess. Her main vocation was to roam mountain forests and uncultivated land with her [nymphs](#) in attendance hunting for lions, panthers, hinds and stags. Contradictory to the later, she helped in protecting and seeing to their well-being, also their safety and reproduction. She was armed with a bow and arrows which were made by [Hephaestus](#) and the [Cyclopes](#).

In one legend, Artemis was born one day before her brother Apollo. Her mother gave birth to her on the island of Ortygia, then, almost immediately after her birth, she helped her mother to cross the straits over to Delos, where she then delivered Apollo. This was the beginning of her role as guardian of young children and patron of women in childbirth. Being a goddess of contradictions, she was the protectress of women in labor, but it was said that the arrows of Artemis brought them sudden death while giving birth. As was her brother, Apollo, Artemis was a divinity of healing, but also brought and spread diseases such as leprosy, rabies and even gout.

Being associated with chastity, Artemis at an early age (in one legend she was three years old) asked her father, the great god Zeus, to grant her eternal virginity. Also, all her companions were virgins. Artemis was very protective of her purity, and gave grave punishment to any man who attempted to dishonor her in any form. [Actaeon](#), while out hunting, accidentally came upon Artemis and her nymphs, who bathing naked in a secluded pool. Seeing them in all their naked beauty, the stunned Actaeon stopped and gazed at them, but when Artemis saw him ogling them, she transformed him into a stag. Then, incensed with disgust, she set his own hounds upon him. They chased and killed what they thought was another stag, but it was their master.

Artemis was very possessive. She would show her wrath on anyone who disobeyed her wishes, especially against her sacred animals. Even the great hero [Agamemnon](#) came upon the wrath of Artemis, when he killed a stag in her sacred grove. His punishment came when his ships were becalmed, while he made his way to besiege Troy. With no winds to sail his ships he was told by the seer [Calchas](#) that the only way Artemis would bring back the winds was for him to sacrifice his daughter [Iphigenia](#). Some versions say he did sacrifice Iphigenia, others that Artemis exchanged a deer in her place, and took Iphigenia to the land of the Tauri (the Crimea) as a priestess, to prepare strangers for sacrifice to Artemis.

(Source: Encyclopedia Mythica. "Artemis.")

